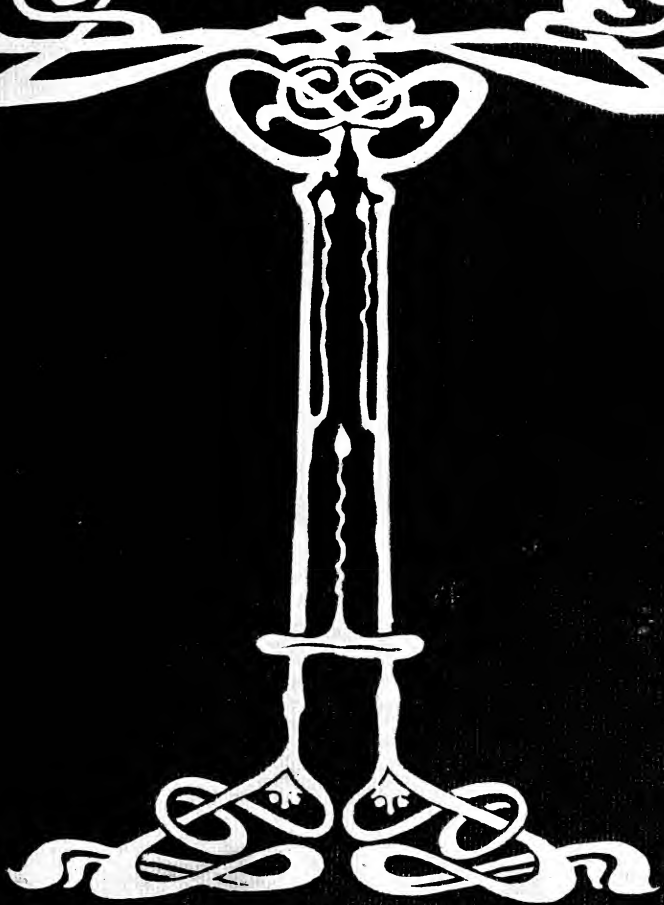
The SPIRITUAL LIFE

O. A. KINGSBURY



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The Spiritual Life.

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By

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New York,
American Tract Society,
150 Nassau Street.

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Contents.

1. Worship, = = = 11.
2. Morality, = = 39.
3. Service, = = = 65.
4. Communion, = = 91.

Foreword.

"O living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow through our deeds and make them pure."

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace.

ROMANS 8 : 5, 6. (R. V.)

The Spiritual Life.

The Spiritual Life is not a sublimated sort of thing, too much in the clouds for the wear and tear of earth. On the other hand, our conception of it must not be low and inadequate. Our standard must be no lower than the line drawn in the Bible, it must be as lofty as the example of Jesus Christ. Religious living is not a cheap thing, yet the scriptural idea of it is practicable. It is the only true life for man.

There are four main elements that enter into the Spiritual Life—*Worship, Morality, Service, Communion.* Each of these contributes its share. While it will not do to develop one of these at the expense of the others, the Spiritual Life is not complete without them all. North, South, East, West make up the circle of the globe.

There is nothing here, it would seem, that is not level to the thought and undertaking of every one. The Spiritual Life has to do with eternal verities, because man is immortal, but it has to do with them in a very practical way, suited to everyday use. Thus, it is fitting the soul for the great change when it drops the body and passes into the open vision of God.

Worship here—better worship there. Goodness here—perfect goodness there. Some measure of service here—sinless and tireless service there. Communion with God even here—there the ineffable rapture of complete fellowship with him forever and forever.

1. Worship.

"Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure;
What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs?"

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him all the earth.

PSALM 96 : 9.

The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. JOHN 4 : 23.

Worship.

What is worship? The word properly means to *respect* or *honor*. It is used to express both the inward sentiment and its outward manifestation. In the English courts of law the judge is addressed as "Your Worship," that is your "worth-ship." He deserves honor because of the position he occupies, quite aside from considerations of his personal character. He is *of worth* as an important part of the machinery of justice.

The words in both the Hebrew and the Greek that are translated by "worship" have primary reference to this showing of honor by bodily prostrations, as was the Oriental custom. Of course, behind the physical act was supposed to be the reverential spirit. When the psalmist sang, "Bow down to Jehovah in beauty of holiness," his thought ran back of the consecrated garments which the priests wore in the sacred services to the holiness which they emblematized, and which was fitting when man approached to God. Our Lord's words to the Samaritan woman make the idea even more distinct: "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

The essence of worship, then, is to be found in the inward rather than in the outward; it is spiritual. If this quality be wanting, there is no true worship. Through whatever forms are used, in speech or in vestments, or in ceremonies, the soul must get back to the essential thing—the approach of man's spirit to Jehovah the Infinite Spirit. For example, you utter the words of the Lord's Prayer; but the mere saying of them means nothing to you, and certainly means nothing to God, unless you have the real sense of speaking to the Heavenly Father. The branch and the leaf show that there is life in the tree, but there must be the life or there will be neither leaf nor branch.

We can worship, because we are spirits. In our present state of existence we are spirits inhabiting bodies. So we not infrequently get the physical and the spiritual confused. Our prayers are put into words, our songs are melodious utterances, and thus we may forget that both the prayer and the praise get their real value from that which is behind them and is not uttered. It is neither the words nor the music that reach God, but the thought, the emotion, the desire, the purpose that is in the heart of the worshipper. The bird cannot worship, though its song rings forth most sweetly on the summer air. The human spirit has understanding, it can know God. It has personality, and so it can go to God as one person

to another. It has power, the power of will, God-given, and so it can say to the Almighty, "My Father!"

True worship is just this—the recognition of God's being, the personal use of this fact, the approach of the soul to God. It may have various forms of expression, but that which gives it value is no more to be seen than the air which, drawn through the organ-pipes, produces the swelling and glorious harmony.

When Jesus said that the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, he indicated a most important element in worship, namely, that the Infinite Spirit whom we are called upon to adore is condescending and tender and loving to his

children. In this view, worship is the going out of the human spirit in all its feebleness and insufficiency to the Great Spirit who, while he rules over all worlds and is glorious in his holiness, is more ready to lend his ear and open his heart to the requests of men than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children. At the same time we are to remember that petition is by no means the sole element in worship. The child does not come to the parent simply to ask for gifts. Your little one twines his arms about your neck because he loves you, and wants to *feel*, as he is sure he will feel, your love for him.

Our Father who art in heaven, we do not simply ask gifts from thee to supply our great and varied

need, but we adore thee, we praise thee, we cast ourselves upon the bosom of thy love. Thus we worship thee!

Who should worship? All men. Indeed, somehow worship has been an instinct of human nature in all ages. This fact, by the way, throws back light upon the point we have just been considering. Man even in degradation is spirit, and the human spirit reaches out toward the Divine Spirit, as the poor, pale plant that happens to grow in a cellar will turn itself toward the light that may come through a narrow window. Normally, the spirit in man must hold some sort of communion with the spirit of Deity.

The greater part of this worship has been mistaken. Very much

of it has been barbarous and even brutal. Horrid rites have formed parts of the liturgies of savage peoples. On the other hand, there is something intensely pathetic in the thought of so many human souls, under varying conditions, and in widely divergent circumstances, reaching out after God. It shows the need that exists in the very constitution of man's nature.

All men ought to worship. That, of course, means *you*, my reader. Are you willing to be less devout than the heathen? It is not that the form one uses is of any great consequence, but the spirit of the thing is essential for any right living. You are a sinner. A sense of this sinfulness, giving depth to your petitions, should ever be present as you come before

God. This is of the very essence of true worship, for it recognizes the relation that exists between sinning man and the holy Jehovah. But there may go with it the glad sense that for your sinfulness there is forgiveness to you, being penitent, and that, in the place of the depravity of your nature, there may be the gracious renewal by the power of the Holy Spirit. You are in a body, and have, therefore, all the bodily limitations. You are living on this earth and in the midst of worldly surroundings and allurements. You have imperative duties laid upon you as a human being who, at present, is in this mortal state. All the more reason why you should lift this spirit that *is you* up to the Father of spirits. Your stay in this world

is but temporary. You are to be in that life beyond forever. Worship is the acknowledgment of that fact, both to yourself and to God. It is the assertion of the spirit as superior to all its material surroundings. It conduces to the disentanglement of the soul from the meshes of worldliness. It is a large factor in that life of the spirit here, which, some glad day not very far in the future, will melt into the blessed life of the world to come, as the glimmer of the dawn is lost in the noontide splendor.

If you who read these words ought to worship, so surely ought every one else on the round world. And it ought to be true worship that ascends from human souls. As it is now,

"The heathen, in his blindness,
Bows down to wood and stone."

Hence the need that exists that the knowledge of the true God should be made known by those who have it to those who have it not. It will not do to say that as this heathen worship is so often sincere it is all that is necessary. We may not doubt that God makes all righteous allowance for the ignorance of men. But he does not mean that men shall remain ignorant. The Western world is giving to the Eastern those things in which our material civilization rejoices. It will be a grievous *sin* if the Christian nations do not give to the myriads that now sit in darkness that knowledge that will enable them to worship in spirit and in truth. "The Father seeketh such to worship him." And the beauty of it

is that the spirituality of the worship that our Lord set forth adapts it to universal diffusion. It is like the light, suited to every place, like the air, which all men must have.

How shall we worship? The essential thing in worship, as we have seen, is the spirit of man approaching the Infinite Spirit, the Father God. But the example of Jesus himself shows us that the inner spirit does not forbid the outward expression. Indeed, that example would indicate that there must be due utterance of worship. Who could draw nearer to the Heavenly Father than the Holy Son? Yet what devotional utterance is richer and deeper than that High Priestly prayer our Lord breathed forth on

that night in which he was betrayed?

Let there be first, then, the worshipful spirit. It is man's heart ascending to God. "When I remember thee upon my bed and meditate on thee in the night watches," said the psalmist. There was no word spoken, no human being to hear if words had been spoken. But through the silence of the night, even without articulate voice, the heart of man went up to God. And this may be under any circumstances. In the crowded street, in the press of business, in the midst of some festive scene—anywhere where the Christian man may be found, there may be this real worship, as man's spirit recognizes the Almighty Spirit.

But while this is true, there will be an important part of worship lacking, if there is no outward expression. The spirit, of course, is the essential thing, but, after all, the spirit ought to express itself. The love of the child toward the parent is at the bottom of happy filial relations. At the same time the parent craves the *expression* of the child's love. So the spirit of devotion in us ought to find voice. That is not wholly satisfactory worship which, as Professor Huxley once phrased it, is "for the most part of the silent sort at the altar of the unknowable and unknown." Nay, rather, we "will worship and bow down, we will kneel before Jehovah our Maker." "We will enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with

praise." "We will *speak* of the glorious honor of his kingdom, and *talk* of his power."

We worship in prayer and in praise. We can read the Word in a worshipful way—in the way, that is, of regarding it as the divine message sent in such shape that our hearts, as well as our heads, can take it in. We can put the spirit of worship into the most simple utterance, or into the most elaborate form. The question of *forms* of worship is comparatively a minor one. Forms help some, while they hinder others. But the use of forms and formalism are two quite distinct things. The form may be full of the true spirit of devotion, but formalism is as empty as a bubble, and as useless as the Mongol's praying wheel.

How shall we worship? By making the outward act expressive of the true spirit that longs for God, that adores God, that, on the wings of praise and prayer, lifts itself up into the very presence of the Divine. But outward worship must not be looked upon as an end in itself. It is a means to an end.

It will have in it, as constituent and formative parts, a number of elements. There will be *Adoration;* we are creatures, and we adore and magnify him who is our Creator. There will be *Thanksgiving;* we are recipients of our Father's unceasing bounty, and it would be ungrateful not to acknowledge our mercies. There will be *Confession;* we are sinners, and ought to confess our sins in penitence before God. There will

be *Supplication;* we ask a willing God to forgive us our sins, through Jesus Christ. There will be *Petition;* we need all things, and must ask if we would receive. There will be *Consecration;* we owe service to our Master. There will be *Intercession;* we plead in behalf of others as well as for ourselves. It all involves penitence for our sins and faith in the grace and power of God. The unrepentant man cannot truly worship. The thank-offering of self-righteous Cain was an offense to God; the sacrifice of penitent Abel was welcomed. It was the Publican and not the Pharisee who went down to his house justified.

When shall we worship? True worship being the approach of the human spirit to the Divine, it

follows that we should be in a worshipful attitude of soul all the time. You would take it very hard if you thought that there was any hour the long day through when your little child was averse to coming into your companionship. "Pray without ceasing," wrote the apostle. He meant that the believer should always be in the spirit of prayer, though not always uttering the words of prayer.

In the nature of things we cannot be engaged at all times in outward worship. We cannot spend all our days in reading the Bible and uttering prayers and singing hymns. The work of the world could not be carried on in this fashion, and we must believe that God wants his work to go on

through the activity of his children as truly as he wants to receive their homage. We are not to neglect one part of life for the sake of the other. The perfect sphere holds two hemispheres in its circle.

While, however, all this is true, it will be found that the observance of certain times of worship is greatly conducive to the maintenance and the enlargement of the spirit of devotion. Our bodies require nourishment, and it is found that they flourish best when food is taken at certain approved times. We surely are not to be slaves to certain hours of devotion, like the monk in his cell. But just as surely, we are not to neglect reasonable times of worship if we expect the devotional spirit to grow strong and pervasive in our natures.

When shall we worship? Always, if we mean the spirit that should animate us. Then there ought to be the private worship of each soul before his God day by day. The particular hour, the method, the duration—all these may safely be left to the individual conscience. But there is need that every individual, some time every day, should be alone with God. One cannot be strong for the battle of life, one cannot get the truest sweetness out of life, one cannot be in the best training for the life to come, unless day by day he stands face to face with his Maker, and talks with him as a man talketh with his friend.

The same, in general, is true in regard to family worship. How can the parents expect their chil-

dren to grow up with a devotional spirit if there are no family devotions? Granted that we live in an age of hurry and bustle. All the greater is the need that the calming and strengthening influences that come from the heavenly Father should be brought into our daily living. What better agency for this is there than family worship?

Along this same line is indicated also the value of Sabbath worship in God's house. It is not that we are to make this do in the place of the worshipful spirit through the week. A devotional Sunday is no excuse for a secular Monday. But true worship in the sanctuary on the Sabbath will most surely hallow and help all the week. As we go about our daily work, our

hearts can rise to God on the wings of the Sabbath petitions, and can sing over again the Sabbath songs, and can be fed upon the Sabbath teachings. There is an immense loss when Sabbath worship is neglected.

Where shall we worship? Anywhere, everywhere. The place matters not. Our Lord declared to the Samaritan woman that it was not Mount Gerizim nor even Jerusalem that made the worship true and pure, but that it was the worshipful heart. Wherever, then, man finds himself, he may worship God.

"By them that seek him he is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

True worship has gone up to God from the humble cottage, as well as from the stately cathedral;

from the pallet of the pauper, as well as from the throne of some devout king; from the caverns of the catacombs, as well as from Cæsar's palace; from the martyr at the stake, as well as from the prosperous Christian in his peaceful home; from the lonely prairie and the still more lonely sea, as well as out of the midst of the bustle of the busy city; up from the confusion of the battlefield, as well as from the child at his mother's knee; from the believer who faces some fierce temptation, as well as from the saint who, his conflict over and his victory won, is just closing his eyes to earthly things; from the Church of God, of every name and every nation, as it will ascend from the Church Triumphant, world without end.

This is one great beauty and value of the worshipful spirit. It may find its legitimate expression anywhere. It is not confined to place. It is an unspeakable advantage to be able to worship God in his sanctuary, but if for any reason the privilege be denied one, he still can worship wherever he may chance to be.

So by worship here on earth we prepare ourselves for the better worship in which we shall engage in the Heavenly Temple. The Scriptures describe that worship, as, of course, they must, in figures of speech. We have pictures of white-robed throngs, of harpers harping with their harps, we catch the echoes of the ceaseless alleluia! Underneath all the imagery is the idea of that which is essential in

worship—the coming of the soul of man into communication with God, the Father of his spirit. The worship of heaven is essentially the same as the worship on earth. The beginner in music is exercising the same vocal organs with which, later, great audiences will be entranced. There needs to be the earthly rehearsal for the heavenly chorus. We may be very sure that he who worships God here on earth, who finds any place holy ground, will feel very much at home when these earthly shadows have melted away in the brightness of the resurrection morning, and he stands before the throne and joins with the holy angels and redeemed saints, as they shout the mighty chorus: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches,

and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

Surely he who would live the spiritual life here and enter upon the perfect spiritual life, when this mortal tabernacle has been left behind, must give due emphasis to the element of worship. It is not all of the spiritual life, but there is no truly spiritual life for any human soul without it.

2. Morality.

"And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought;

"Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef."

Depart from evil, and do good, and dwell forevermore. PSALM 37 : 27.

But love ye your enemies, and do good and lend hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.
LUKE 6 : 35.

Morality.

What is Morality? The word is used here in its large sense, as when we speak of man as a moral being. We mean, thereby that he is something more than merely a physical or a rational being. He is capable of doing right, of being good. The word is used sometimes in a smaller sense, as when we say that the merely moral man lacks those high and large qualities that distinguish the spiritual man. True spirit-

uality certainly will express itself in many things in the terms and forms of common morality. But it will be more deeply rooted than mere natural morality, and will rise to higher and richer achievements. The Christian man will not steal, nor commit adultery, nor murder a fellow being. But his morality in these particulars—or in others like them—by no means measures the full scope of his spiritual life.

In other words, the righteousness required in God's kingdom does not consist in natural morality divorced from religion. There are those who claim that this divorce can be made. But such teachers have in view simply the relation of man to his fellows. By their supposition the relations man

sustains to God are shut out of the consideration. The principle of action that governs under these circumstances has received the name of "altruism"—"regard for the other." It is a good principle so far as it goes. But it is a very different thing from what the Scriptures term "brotherly love." It does not go so far as that; its roots do not strike as deep, nor do its branches stretch as wide nor bear such abundant and rich fruit.

It is of the utmost importance that men should live the righteous life here and now. We are here in this world, and are set in relation to our fellow men. We owe certain duties, in consequence of this position and of these relations. But the point is that men are more likely to do their whole duty when

urged by the religious motive than when simply under the impulse of an amiable altruism. In other words, real morality cannot exist without religion, unless atheism is true. But atheism is not true. God is, and he is the moral governor of the universe. The morality that has reference to him, as well as to man has in it depth and authority and power. God's claims upon men are fundamental and supreme, and true morality is the satisfaction of those claims.

Hence it is easy to see that the spiritual life will express itself in holy living, for that is what true morality is. To say of any one, "he is an immoral Christian," is to utter a contradiction in terms, and the conception is simply monstrous. True morality is Chris-

tianity in exercise. When, as the winter passes away and the spring comes on, the tree puts forth no leaves, we say that it is dead. So if we see no moral conduct, if there are none of those things that constitute what we call goodness, we are forced to say that there is no spiritual life.

Morality, rightly understood, is not something meagre and limited to relations that are bound to pass away. It is large and full, for it has its source in the absolute perfection of the divine nature. So it touches the whole of one's life, giving it fibre and completeness here on earth, and linking itself to the perfected sanctification of the kingdom that is to come. It is the exhibition—on a small scale, to be sure, and with many imper-

fections—of the heavenly righteousness of the saint. If you are going to a distant city, which you have never visited, it is somewhat of a satisfaction if you can see a picture of it. The picture is not the city, but it gives you some idea of what the city looks like, and so far is a help.

To turn the thought around and see it from another side, it is to be said that it is a fatal mistake for anyone, however apparently zealous, to hold that his religious experience is valid, if its effect is anything short of the love and the practice of all righteousness.

The Standard of Morality. "Every lesser good has an essential element of sin," said St. Augustine. The standard is the mountain top, not some far lower

peak more conveniently reached. Morality is the good life, not the pretty good. It is the righteous life. Righteous means *right*, and when a thing is right it has no element of wrong in it. The slightest maladjustment of the telescope will introduce great errors into the astronomer's calculations. Men sometimes try to bring the standard down to the level of their attainments. That may enable them to indulge in a false pride, at least for a time, but it does not really change the standard. Conscience, after all, keeps calling in the ear even of the torpid soul, "Higher yet, higher yet! Perfection be thy aim!"

God's law is for us the standard of holiness, and this law is revealed in several ways. There is what

we call "the light of nature." It is that sense of right and wrong which exists in every human being. It is a very dim light in many cases—like the glowworm compared with the sun. We hardly can say that this light sets perfection before man, and yet even the light of nature beckons him onward and upward.

Still the fact remains that sin has perverted man's moral nature, has blinded his spiritual vision. So when left to the light of nature, he will not be making progress toward perfection. What is the general character of the nations that know not God? Who of us would be willing to become a citizen of Turkey or India or China?

As this light is not sufficient, God has been pleased to reveal

himself clearly and distinctly in his Word. This Word is indeed a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. It is text book and guide book and law book. It unfolds the great principles that are of universal application to man's moral conduct. It is level to the understanding of the young, and its riches are exhaustless by even the most mature thought.

Further, God has been pleased to make himself known by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who carries the truth to the individual heart, and makes his impress on the individual life.

"The Spirit breathes upon the word,
And brings the truth to sight;
Precepts and promises afford
A sanctifying light."

But the supreme revelation of God is in Jesus Christ. He came

down to our human level. We can know him as we cannot know the Infinite Spirit, and through him we can know the Infinite Spirit. "He that hath seen me," he himself said, "hath seen the Father." Christ shows us God's love, God's justice, God's righteousness. Follow the life of the Lord as it is depicted in the gospel story. Throw upon that picture the light that shines out of epistle and Apocalypse. Thus see what that life was; nay, rather, see what Jesus *is*. For he ever liveth. He is the same yesterday and to-day and forever. He shows us what holy living is. He becomes the standard for all his followers. "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" he asked the Pharisees. They could not point out one slightest stain

upon his character, nor indicate one slightest failure in any of his acts. He was kind, he was loving, he was pure, he was obedient to his heavenly Father, he hated sin, he was just, he was patient, he was forgiving.

He calls upon his followers to walk in his footsteps. He tells them to be perfect, even as the Father in heaven is perfect. In his life he pointed out the way of this perfection. His example lays obligation upon the believer's conscience. The standard is Christ's pure and perfect life. Until one has attained unto the likeness of that he has not reached the goal.

It should be added that Christ is not only the standard and model of all true morality, but he is also the inspirer of it. His love in the

heart of the redeemed man is the impelling power of spiritual morality. The life the believer lives in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God.

Two or three things in particular may be noted here. This true moral standard will claim from us universal love and absolute truth. Is it right living to entertain a sentiment anything less than love for all the family of man, and to do anything less than all that is within one's power for the benefiting of mankind? We remember that Jesus in his last agony invoked the Father's forgiveness even upon his cruel enemies. Is it right living to be less than absolutely truthful in all one's relations to his fellows? Is there any place under this standard for tricks, for shams, for

subterfuges, for evasions? The crystal is pure to the very center of it. So ought a man's heart to be. Blessed is he who "speaketh the truth in his heart."

Concerning all the duties that present themselves to us day by day—duties growing out of various circumstances and relations of our lives, it is to be said that we cannot feel ourselves justified in aiming at anything less than absolute right in the discharge of them.

So to the question, What is the moral standard set before men? the answer must be, perfection, as that perfection is shown to us in God, revealed in Jesus Christ, and made plain to our hearts by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The universal obligation of morality calls for our thought. There can be only one standard of pure morals for all subjects of God's kingdom. The Constitution of the United States sets forth the principles of government that are applicable throughout the Union. It is not adjustable to different uses in one or another of the sections of our country. So the divine law, which is the expression of God's nature, makes the same demands everywhere in God's kingdom. The obligations of morality lie upon every human being in all the circumstances and relations of his life.

What is to be said of the fact that in the nature of things a very considerable proportion of our time must be given to the things of

our daily life—the farm, the shop, the office, the school, the home? Is the obligation of morality off when we are engaged in these things that sometimes we unthinkingly, but wrongly, call secular? That was a very mistaken division of life that was made quite early in the history of the Christian church, when some men were called "religious," because they drew apart from the routine of home and of business, and gave themselves up to a round of devotions, while the rest were deemed "secular." That division, unfortunately, has not become entirely obliterated yet, though we have been coming to a better understanding of the true condition. Morality, that is holiness, is as obligatory on one man as on

another; it should be as dominant in our hours of labor as in our times of devotion. If one cannot live the good life as he walks behind the plow or swings the hammer, he cannot be really good at the altar of God.

This thought needs emphasis. The idea of morality, as the Scriptures set it forth, *righteousness*, to use the more strictly Bible word, allows no artificial distinction between the so-called religious and secular. That is, there may not properly be the parceling out of life into divisions, one of which is God's realm, while the other is our own. Jehovah will not divide his kingdom with anyone. Worship has its indispensable place, but it does not cover the whole surface of life. Men must pray; the spiritual

life cannot be sustained without prayer. But men must work at daily tasks as well. Is the spiritual life to be confined only to the times of the bended knee? May it not permeate and glorify the hours when the muscles strain and the brain throbs with the work that one is doing? The injunction is just as absolute to love one's enemies and to lend and to do good, as it is to worship the Father of us all. If one is not spiritual as he goes about his daily tasks, he will not be truly spiritual when he bows the knee in the presence of his God.

This is not to say that our righteousness wins the kingdom and the crown. But we must remember that the salvation which is in Jesus Christ, and which may be

had for the taking, means the bringing of spiritual life, the life of Christ, into our hearts by faith. It is not salvation *in* our sins, but *from* our sins. It is not a salvation by and by—a sort of through ticket to heaven—but a present salvation. "There is, therefore, *now* no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." The walking after the spirit all through the life is a most important element in the salvation. The weight of its obligation ought to rest heavily on every Christian heart. Believing on Jesus Christ, his great love, our indebtedness to him, our desire to make progress in character-building, the impulse that ought to be in us to be good and to do good—all these cry aloud

to us to show our faith by our works.

Moreover, it should be said that this obligation does not rest solely upon the Christian. The absolute obligation of all moral excellence is universal and immutable. There is no one, whosoever he is and whatsoever may be his profession, who has any valid excuse for not making it his aim and his patient endeavor to live day by day the righteous life in all his relations, as well to God as to his fellow man.

This morality is practical and practicable. The standard is as high as it can be. There is the mountain summit's white beauty up, up, up against the clear blue heights of the sky! "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven." Yet ideally this high

standard is attainable. We are not to suppose that God puts any command upon his children that they cannot obey. That would not be like God. Jesus Christ came to earth and became our brother man. Where is the flaw in the life he lived during those human years? The ideal for man is to walk in his footsteps.

In making instruments of precision—measuring scales graduated to ten-thousandths of an inch, for instance—perfection is the standard. It is true, of course, that absolute perfection is never reached. But the relative perfection is higher when the absolute is the standard. Because the attempt is at absolute accuracy, that which is attained is higher and better than if the standard were

lowered to meet the obstacles in the way. If the micrometer screw on the surveyor's level will not give an absolutely accurate reading, nevertheless it is so closely accurate that the work proves. Ideally, practical standard accuracy is obtainable.

So it is with this morality. It is practicable. We do not live our life in one piece; it is made up of a succession of thoughts, motives, deeds. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten." One attains seventy years of life by living a day at a time. What does that mean? Why this, that we can make to-day's life what it ought to be. This word one utters —shall it be a bad word or a good one? It certainly is within one's power to make it a good one. This

deed one is about to do—shall it be a deed to help or to hurt a brother man? One has the decision of that matter in his own hands. If one word can be made sweet and one act good, why not every word and every act? When we fall short, we are ourselves to blame.

Will it be easy? In one sense, no. Any work that man undertakes that is of real value costs effort. We cannot get something for nothing in the moral sphere any more than in the material. No, it is not easy to be good. It requires watchfulness, painstaking, steady and persistent effort. It means that we may not suffer ourselves to be the sport of our changing moods. It means that we may not relax our grasp. It means that it is woe to the sentinel who sleeps on the post of duty.

Yet, on the other hand, it is easy, for this righteousness is in accordance with the eternal laws of our being, as made in the divine image. Moreover, in our effort after its attainment we can have the aid of the Divine Helper. It takes effort to acquire knowledge, but in a very true sense it is easier, in every way better, to know than to be ignorant. Man is made for God and is not really at rest until he is seeking to serve God. We are weak, but we can have the great delight and comfort of feeling that under our weakness is the uplift of Almighty strength. The children of the Highest need never doubt the Father's readiness to give them power.

In point of fact, multitudes of men have been enabled by divine grace—that grace which they

sought and took—to live a life of practical, though not perfect, holiness. The majority of these have not been famous. They have not been canonized as saints, but they have been true saints for all that. They have shown the effects of the spiritual life, its beautiful and blessed outworking, in their simplicity, their purity, their faithfulness and their efficiency. This earth has been the richer for their being in it, and heaven has garnered them in its treasure house forever.

Surely this morality, this right living, this holy conduct of the believer day by day, is a most important element in the spiritual life. It is grounded in God's law; its standard is supreme; its obligation is universal; by divine help it can be attained. No holy living —then no spiritual life. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

3. Service.

"*The path of duty is the way to glory:*
He that walks it, only thirsting
For the right, and learns to deaden
Love of self, before his journey closes,
He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
Into glossy purples, which outredden
All voluptuous garden roses.

* * *

"*The path of duty is the way to glory;*
He that ever following her commands
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won
His path upward, and prevailed,
Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled,
Are close upon the shining table-lands,
To which our God himself is moon and sun."

O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds. PSALM 116 : 16.

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. MARK 16 : 15.

Service.

"Let this avail, just, dreadful, mighty God,
This be not all in vain, that thrice ten
years,
Thrice multiplied by superhuman pangs,
In hungers and in thirsts, fevers and cold,
In coughs, aches, stitches, ulcerous throes
and cramps,
A sign betwixt the meadows and the cloud,
Patient, on this tall pillar, I have borne
Rain, wind, frost, heat, hail, damp, and
sleet, and snow;
And I had hoped that ere this period
closed
Thou would'st have caught me up into
thy rest,
Denying not these weather-beaten limbs
The meed of saints, the white robe and
the palm."

This is a part of the picture that Tennyson draws of Saint Simeon Stylites, a so-called saint of the early part of the Fifth century. His claim to sainthood, which comes out more fully as the poem goes on, consisted in his self-infliction of bodily tortures. The object of these, in his own words, was

"to subdue this home
Of sin, my flesh, which I despise and hate."

In the process, as is obvious, he was of no use to the men of his time in the way of rendering them any practical service. On the contrary, he held up before them through all those long and painful years an utterly mistaken ideal of what sanctity, the full-developed spiritual life, really is. Even if he lived according to his light, he was

far enough removed from that true love, both to God and man, that is the root of real Christian obedience. It was a self-righteous abstinence from crime that was the controlling motive in him. Unlike that true saint, the apostle Paul, his life was not inspired by love to Christ and to his fellow men. As he failed conspicuously in observing the "second" commandment in the law, so it is evident that the "first and great commandment" did not dominate his being.

Compare with the existence of this mistaken mendicant, on his pillar sixty feet up in the air, the life of such a man as Martin Luther, who came out of a monk's cell and went diligently to work to teach his fellow men of the free salvation that is offered to everyone, through

faith in Jesus Christ. The foundation of the spiritual life to him was justification by faith. But what man in all the history of Christianity (if we except the apostles) has been of greater service?

Or, if a modern example is wanted, compare the piety of him who said

> "I, 'tween the spring and downfall of the light,
> Bow down one thousand and two hundred times,
> To Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the Saints,"

with the piety of the "Apostle of the New Hebrides," John G. Paton, through whose service such wonders have been wrought in those barbarous islands.

In the true spiritual life there must be the element of *service*.

What is Service? To answer in a word we might say that it is putting Christianity to work. It is doing good to our fellow men for our heavenly Father's sake, for our Redeemer's sake.

It is perfectly evident that Christianity must have this full element of usefulness if it is to be of large value. If the investigations of physicists from Franklin to Faraday had found no practical outcome, electricity would not be the wonderful and useful power that it is to-day. The scientists made their very curious and interesting experiments, but they were matters of the laboratory and of scientific publications. Then came the era of the practical application of what had been made known through these researches. So elec-

tricity is now at man's service, and its use is to be vastly extended before the Twentieth century is old. Electricity at work is greatly better than electricity in the theoretical and experimental stage.

Christianity has enormous latent power in it which ought to be put to work. The Christian man ought to be of service along Christian lines. The believer in Jesus ought to make his Christianity tell in all that he does. And there ought to be more than the unconscious influence that goes forth from every good life. Of course, what a man is, is the first consideration. But what a man *does* is also of vast importance. One ought to try consciously to do good. His doing forms no small part of what he is, for doing is a

part of worthy being. The hermit in his cave or on his lofty pillar is not an ideal representative of the spiritual life. There ought to be worship and there ought to be holy character; but there ought also to be Christian work.

The kind of work that is done is not perhaps of so much consequence as the fact that faithful work is done in whatever sphere Providence indicates, for there is room for many kinds of labor in God's great workshop. But the service that really forms a part of the spiritual life is work done for God. We are not to restrict it to what we sometimes call religious work, yet the fact is that Christians too often fail in doing the distinctively religious work they ought to do.

It is a fair designation of service as a part of the spiritual life to say that it is anything that will tend to the moral uplift of mankind. Our material advancement has not a little influence upon moral conditions. It is easier for men to live wholesome lives in America than in Turkey. But these material things may be left rightly enough to take care of themselves. The Christian man is to do what he can to make the world morally better; and he is to do this as in the sight of God. He is to do it because God's way of bettering the world and bringing in the heavenly kingdom is through human instrumentality.

One may be engaged in this service without having it always in distinct consciousness. As the artisan toils at his daily task he need

not be all the time thinking, "I am doing this for the sake of my wife and children." Yet there can be no question that such thought will nerve him for the work, and steady him in it, and help him over its hard places. If one—teaching the ignorant, ministering to the needy, telling the story of the love of God—feels, "I am doing this service for Christ's sake," then there is a charm to the work that there can not be otherwise. Yet, even when this consciousness does not rise into very great distinctness, there may be the rendering of excellent service.

This service for Christ's sake is fuller and richer than what the philanthropic philosopher calls "altruism." It is altruism, but it is more; it has a stronger and

more enduring impulse working in it than simply a regard for "the other man." The Christian man looks upon his fellows not simply as human beings who are to be the objects of his care, but as brother men who are children of the one Father, and whom he loves because God loves them. Moonlight is charming, but it is a reflected light, and it is pale in comparison with the glorious effulgence of the sun whose rays are life-giving.

It is Christian service that is to save the world. Of course the power is of God, but at the same time the instrumentality is man's. In order that the water may flow into the city for its drink there must be the system of pipes. That the electricity may come from the power-house to light your home

there must be the conducting wire. The pipes are not the water and the wire is not the electricity, yet each is necessary in its place for the accomplishment of the object in view. So God is doing his work in bringing the world to himself through the agency of men. They must carry the water of life to their fellows that men may no longer thirst; they must make the light of life to shine upon the benighted that men may walk no longer in darkness.

When we talk of "saving the world" we must remember that much is included. There will be "foreign missions," of course; but there will be much else also. The needs of humanity are very great. Even in so-called Christian countries, even in our own most highly

favored land, how multiplied and pressing are human wants—those moral wants of which their subjects are not always conscious, those material wants which have their influence on moral being. City slums call for a material as well as a moral purification. How can moral transformation be expected among the members of a family where all, without regard to age or sex, must herd together, day and night alike, in one room? Christian service, for one thing, will set itself to do away with the squalor that prevails to such a frightful extent where population is congested. Tenement house reform and kindred philanthropies have a strong claim upon the spirit of Christian service. Ignorance is to be enlightened. The enormous

evil of intemperance is to be conquered with spiritual weapons wielded by Christian men. Social immoralities, commercial dishonesties, political chicaneries, are barriers across the path of progress; they are a menace to peace and purity. Christian service is the true recourse for their extirpation.

Then, while there are these enormous evils at home, there are no fewer nor smaller ones abroad. The heathen nations still sit in darkness and in the region and shadow of death. When the best that truth warrants has been said as to the nature of the heathen religions, when whatever there was of beauty in the character of such a religious teacher as Gautama Buddha, for instance, has been

admitted, the fact still remains that these religions are grievously defective, where they are not utterly erroneous. The fact remains that the heathen are sunk in ignorance and superstition and unutterable degradation. What light they have is a glimmer, not a radiance. They cannot be bettered along the line of their ancient faiths. They need—they sorely need Christianity. The "Light of Asia" is but dimness in the clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness. Jesus Christ is the true light to enlighten men.

Now these evils at home, this heathenism abroad, will not right themselves. The darkness of night does not change itself into the morning. It is only when the sun climbs the eastern sky that the

day breaks and the shadows flee away. Is ignorance going to make itself wise? Is degradation going to lift itself into cleanness and comfort? Is lust going to evolve itself into purity, or intemperance into sobriety? Is political chicanery to be expected to transform itself into civic righteousness? Is heathenism of itself to rise out of its hoary superstitions and its abominable idolatries and its dreadful cruelties into the power and purity and peace of the religion of Jesus Christ? We know that this can never be. All along the history of the world, the work of betterment has been carried on through the agency of men. Our Lord Jesus died for men and brought into the darkened and sin-stricken world eternal redemption. But he did

not stay here to bring men to himself. He went back to heaven where he was before, but he left a parting command to his followers, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." And the world is better to-day than it was nineteen hundred years ago, because the followers of Jesus have been faithful in some measure to his command. Just in the proportion in which the glad tidings of eternal life in Jesus Christ have been heralded up and down the earth, has mankind been blessed. The measure is the faithfulness of human service.

But how much more might have been accomplished had Christian people been more faithful. How much more rapid and large had been the progress of all good had

there been more Christian service! The time of the world's Christianization is in the hands of Christ's followers. It is the question of their faithfulness.

Who ought to be of service? EVERYONE! But when we say that, we make our answer so general that it is to be feared that it loses much of its force. Yet it is the simple fact that upon every man rests the obligation of service, that is of work to be done that shall be to the good of his fellows and to the glory of God. There is no possible reason that can be given that will exempt any one from being of use in the world—some moral use among men. The more he knows and the higher his character, the weightier is his obligation in this direction.

Of course, no one person can do everything. "There are diversities of gifts." As there are various needs in the world, so God has bestowed various endowments upon men, that the lack of one may be made good by the supply of another. Each one is to work along the line of his own aptitudes and in adaptation to the circumstances in which he is placed. When it was proposed to build a railroad through one of the cañons of the Rocky Mountains the surveyors had to be slung from the top of the precipices down into the gorge that they might make their measurements. Certainly the men who hung there in mid-air while they ran their levels, had as much share in the building of the road as those who, later on,

cut the shelves in the rocky walls, or laid the rails on the precarious roadbed. A great work may be carried on under the intelligent direction of one man, but no great work is accomplished by the unaided labor of one man. The greater the work is, the more varied are its details, the greater will be the number of individuals required to carry it to completion.

No one can do everything, but everybody can do something. The practical trouble is that there are very many who hardly do anything. The Church of Christ is composed of those who professedly are interested in their fellow men, professedly are concerned to extend Christ's kingdom in the world. As a matter of fact what do we find true of these people in regard to

service? Thanks be to God, we find some who are of use. There are faithful ones everywhere. But how many Christian people there are who, when they have attended the sanctuary exercises—once, shall we say?—on the Sabbath, seem to think that they have discharged the full tale of their religious duty. It is something, to be sure, to attend the sanctuary. It will be not a little if one will influence others to come with him to God's house. And, by the way, there is more that might be done in this direction than sometimes we imagine. But after all, in the average case it would seem as if one might *do* more than attend church on Sunday. Where would be the Sunday school and the other organizations that a church uses

in its work, if this were the limit of the activity of all its members?

Of course, all Christian service is not confined to what we call church work. The field is vast, the specific needs are many. The stress of the question is not so much as to the particular piece of service, but whether one is doing all he might. There are providential limits which must be regarded. God gives us work to do that sometimes is very different from what we would have chosen for ourselves. But our heavenly Father is not a hard Master; he does not exact from us that which we are not able to render. Yet the fact remains that a very large number of those who bear Christ's name and who professedly are devoted to his service, do little compared with

what they should do—in praying, in giving, in working in any way —for the advancement of his kingdom.

Reader, will you not make this personal, and ask yourself in all honesty this question—"Am I doing what *I* ought to do in the service of Jesus Christ, who loves me so, who has done so much for me, who depends on *me* to do *my* share of good in this needy world?"

The hermit on his pillar is not a type of symmetrical spiritual life. There is life in him, but it is fevered and unwholesome. He puts the emphasis in the wrong place. His style of piety is the outcome of overstrung emotion, uncontrolled by Christian intelligence. On the other hand there may be such a development of

active service, such a rushing to and fro in a sort of religious bustle, that men will neglect worship and fail to walk with God.

Yet even as we nourish our bodies that they may be fit to do the work that is required of them, so our spiritual life is not full and complete unless—as one's conscience under divine direction dictates—it puts its force into SERVICE for God our Father in the person of men our brothers.

4. Communion.

"Speak to Him, thou, for he hears, and spirit with spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands or feet."

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. PSALM 91 : 1.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. MATTHEW 6 : 6.

Communion.

I have in mind the memory of one who was very dear to me, an accomplished musician, who, long years ago, went from the melodies of earth to where the "harpers are harping with their harps." The great charm of his performances on piano or organ was that, in addition to his thorough technical mastery of the art, he had the soul of music in him, and put so much of feeling into his rendering of song or hymn or oratorio. That subtle

element of *feeling*—so impossible to define, and yet so very real—made him the complete musician that he was. Without that, his correctness and readiness would have lacked a crowning excellence.

What would the spiritual life be, without communion with God, to the devout soul? The believer must live the holy life, or we shall be sure that he is not really a believer. He must engage in active and efficient work for God, or we shall be compelled to say that there is no life in him. But how shall he have this life unless he get it from communion with God.

What is Communion? By derivation the word means what we have in common with another. It is fellowship with the Almighty Father. It is the human soul, not

simply coming close to, but coming into touch with the Divine. Is it not wonderful that this can be? Yet so lovingly does our Father deal with us that he has made it a fact of Christian experience.

Communion is not the same as worship. It lies back of worship and occasions it. The musician to whom reference was made could give such varied expression to his performances, because there was the very soul of music in him. Of course, this musical feeling was increased as he gave expression to it. As in so many other things, there was a reflex influence. The musical feeling called for expression, and the expression quickened and enlarged and developed the musical feeling. The healthy body demands physical exercise, and

exercise increases health. True spiritual life finds a part of its expression in worship, and then the worship stimulates the spiritual life. The fundamental thing is the spirit behind the act of worship, and that spirit is a sense of communion with God.

The consciousness of God's presence will be an essential element in this communion. The best thought of the present day sees God more pervasively and constantly in his world than men have done in some former generations. True science discovers God at work now in the material world, as he has been through the long ages of the past. His power, his wisdom, his skill, can be understood "from the things that are made." We can see him, if we will, in the

sunshine and in the rain, in the plant, in the tree, in the animal, in the sky and in the ocean; in the light and in the darkness; in the seasons as they come and go.

"These as they change, Almighty Father, these
Are but the varied God. The rolling year is full of thee."

If God is so truly in the material world, he must be at least as truly in the realm of spiritual being. God is spirit, filling all space and all time. To be in communion with him is, first of all, to recognize that great fact. It is to know that if we speak to him he will hear. Yes, it is to know that before we speak he understands our thought afar off. So we are intellectually in communion with him.

What we know of communion with our fellow men will help to make clear the idea of communion with God. There are those among the men with whom we come in contact, with whom we have little especially in common. Our occupations, our tastes, our ambitions do not run along the same lines. On the other hand there are those with whose tastes, whose pursuits, whose mental and moral characteristics, we are in complete sympathy. With such we can have communion because of these many things which we have in common. So when we have a sense of God's presence in all that pertains to our spiritual being, when our views of his greatness and goodness and holiness are right, when we realize his claims upon our love and serv-

ice, then there are things in common between us, and we can, and instinctively do, enter into communion with him. We enjoy the things which he enjoys. We think his thoughts after him. We are impelled to try to do those things which shall build up his kingdom. We love him with all tenderness. We rejoice in the sense of his friendship.

Nor is this mere ecstatic devotion, that spends itself in the enjoyment of the hour. It is the great current that majestically swings through the ocean depths, not the billows that chase each other over its surface and dash and die upon the shore. Neither is it an asceticism that takes one away from participation in the business and cares, and even en-

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joyments of the daily life. Yet he who is in real communion with God, how is he lifted up above any sordid groveling to the gains of earth, above the fascinations of its low pleasures, above the temptations of its mean ambitions, even above the sense of drudgery in its lawful occupations! His spiritual life is fed, as the river gets its being from the crystal springs that break out from the hillside. God lives in him and he lives in God. In a very true and blessed sense he and God are at one.

The need of communion. For one thing, communion is behind all true worship. The utterance that is addressed to God is hollow mockery—yes, it is an insult to the divine majesty, unless it is the expression of the real feeling of the

heart. That our worship may be what it should be, there must dwell in the heart the sense of the reality of God, of his sympathy with his children, of his readiness to hear and to answer their prayers. So, in point of fact, the believer comes to the place in his experience where prayer has passed from being an act, or even a habit, into being a state of the soul—always in prayer, or at least in the prayerful condition; always in communion with God. It is to the spirit what that subtle something we call vitality is to the physical frame. When vitality is low the body can put forth but little effort. There must be vitality in some degree or the body dies and molders into dust.

Looking from another point of view, it is to be said that communion with God is the food of the soul. The soul must be nourished just as truly as the body. Picture to yourself a soul that holds no communion with God. Can that soul have spiritual life? What becomes of the mind when it is given no true mental nourishment? Where one will not read nor study nor think, his mind grows vacuous; mental ability decays. In proportion this is true if suitable mental nourishment is not administered. So with the soul. It can hold communion with God; it must hold communion with God or it dies. Everlasting death—what is it but that "eternal sin" which forever holds the unrepentant sinner away from God, and so

out of communion with him? But the soul that is in communion with the Heavenly Father brings thereby divine life into itself, and it grows and flourishes the more close and continuous is that communion. Thus, the soul partakes of the hidden manna; it eats of the fatness of God's house; it drinks from the river of God's pleasure.

Communion conduces to worthy Christian life. It lifts one's Christianity out of formality and makes it real. So skilfully does the artist do his work sometimes, that, for a moment or two, a wax figure will deceive our eyes. But the thing can neither hear nor speak nor walk, and we very soon perceive that it is only an image. It is clever as a counterfeit, but it is useless as a person. There often

is the counterfeit of the Christian life. Outwardly it deceives, but there is no life in it. Reality of Christian experience comes only from communion with God. It is this real religion that is of avail for the individual; it is this that inures to the lasting benefit of mankind.

Indeed, one cannot put too high a value upon this reality of Christian experience. If our Christianity is not real it is absolutely worthless. If one is a Christian only in pretence, or in some formal way, he is what our Saviour called "a branch that is withered." Neither the world here nor heaven hereafter has any use for withered branches. Cut them off! But God has great use—great use here and glory un-

speakable hereafter—for the real Christian. The real Christian is he who lives in communion with his Heavenly Father, and so brings the divine life into his being, to animate and inspire his activities, to sweeten and beautify his daily duties, to make him glad through all his mortal years, to ripen him for the eternal and blissful ages of sinless intercourse with God when he shall see Him face to face and know even as also he is known.

Hindrances to Communion.—Alas! that these should be, but it is only too plain that they exist.

At the bottom of them is a want of piety. There is in too many of us a lack of a true sense of spiritual things. Why are there so many people in the world who are not in any way musical performers? For

the simple reason that they have not the sense of harmony. Melodious sounds bring to them no especial sense of pleasure. So if our sense of spiritual things is feeble, in just that measure it hinders communion. "He that cometh to God must believe that HE IS." That means vastly more than the mere intellectual acknowledgment of the divine Being. It means that one feels God, knows him, hears his voice in the soul.

Now if we are absorbed in material things, those things that pertain to this life only, then God, in that very fact, is shut out of the soul. If one loves these things that perish, loves them supremely, then his love cannot rise to God. The impenitent man cannot have communion with God. That is an

awful thought, but it simply corresponds to a dreadful fact. If one loves his sins more than he loves his Saviour, how can he enter into communion with the Holy One? "What fellowship hath light with darkness, or what concord hath Christ with Belial?" There is nothing in common between the impenitent soul and the Saviour God. While the prodigal remained in the far country he could have no communion with his father. Alas, that so many men so little realize what it is *not* to be in communion with the Father in heaven. What is it for the lungs to pant in a vacuum, for the stomach to crave food when there is famine in the land, for blinded eyes to long for the sweet light of day that shall nevermore shine

upon them? Yet these are but feeble figures of what it is for the human soul to shut itself out from communion with God.

Of course, the Christian believer, in the very fact of his penitence and faith, comes into something of communion with his Lord and Master. It is evident, however, that there may be degrees in this experience. One may sip of the cooling spring, but the thirsty man will drink deeply of its crystal flood. The question of the measure of our communion is a question of the hindrances that we permit to stand in our way. Distrust is a hindrance. "According to your faith be it unto you," is our Saviour's word to every soul. If our faith is feeble, then God is not as real to us as otherwise he

might be. "Lord, increase our faith." Spiritual indolence is a hindrance. The sluggard farmer does not reap abundant harvests. Christ asks of our somnolent souls, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" Self-dependence is a hindrance to the freest and fullest communion with the Heavenly Father. "The servant is not greater than his master." We are not self-nourished, but must go to the fountain to drink. And worldliness is a hindrance. "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, entering in, choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful." If one insists on walking on the ground he cannot soar into the ambient air.

But these hindrances, of whatever sort, can give way. The sense of spiritual things can be cultivated. Our communion with God can be enlarged. The hindrances are all on the human side. If our communion is at any time meagre, it is not God's fault. When the feast is spread, one has only himself to blame if he goes away hungry. We may go to the divine fountain and drink and drink again, and the fountain will still run free and full. We can come into closer and ever closer fellowship with our Father, until, as we cry, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God," the echo rings clear in the longing heart, "I *know* whom I have believed."

So we are ready to understand more clearly the *effect of communion*. In a very true and positive sense this communion with God is established whenever anyone repents of his sins and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes it is with great rapture that one comes into the consciousness of the presence of God and of his wonderful love. But the general law of God's kingdom holds here as elsewhere. That law is growth.

So it comes about, for one thing, that as the believer enters more and more into communion with the Heavenly Father, he has a growing consciousness of the divine presence. The unseen God becomes more and more real to him. See how much this means: You are a believer, and you have

a consciousness of God's presence. A temptation fronts you, but you are in communion with him who was tempted and sinned not; in his strength you make valiant battle and gain the victory. Some black-winged sorrow swoops down upon you, and you are well-nigh overborne. But you are close to the Father and the Everlasting Arms stretch under you, and you are lifted above the sorrow into divine peace. Some duty is to be done that calls for large effort. You are weak, how can you engage successfully in so great a task? As you take the work to God you hear him say, "My strength is made perfect in weakness," and you go singing to your toil. Some joy crowns your days, and because you are near to God, in touch with

him, the joy is more beautiful and glad.

Communion with God beautifies and gladdens the Christian's life. The closer one is in fellowship with the Divine Father the more lovely his life will be, for then there will be shining upon him, even amid the shadows of this earthly state, great beams of glory from the Sun of Righteousness.

Further, this communion is the animating element in a piety that is simple and sincere and symmetrical. It gives a sanctity that is not morbid, but thoroughly healthful. When one is in communion with God he easily learns what is the right thing to do under the varying circumstances of life. He comes to look at things from the divine, rather than from the

human point of view. When the Pharisees were astonished at the ability and boldness of Peter and John, they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. The graciousness and the power of the Master were made evident in the disciples. When one lives in communion with God, God's light shines in his eyes, and God's love is vibrant in his voice, and God's grace spreads a halo about his whole being.

And what is this communion but the bringing of heaven down to earth, the foretaste here and now of immortal blessedness? The Christian believer, even while he is in this earthly life, can enjoy something of the bliss of heaven. The cupful is not the fountain, to be sure, but it clearly enough

indicates the quality of the fountain. The real joy of heaven is to be with God, forever away from sorrow and sin and death. It will be perfect communion—the seeing face to face, the knowing as also we are known. Just so far as the Christian comes into communion with God, now is he realizing the blessedness of the heavenly state.

"Still, still with Thee! when purple morning breaketh,
When the bird waketh, and the shadows flee;
Fairer than morning, lovelier than the daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with Thee.

* * *

"Still, still with Thee! as to each newborn morning
A fresh and solemn splendor still is given,
So doth this blessed consciousness awaking,
Breathe, each day, nearness unto Thee and heaven.

"So shall it be at last, in that bright morning,
When the soul waketh, and life's shadows flee;
Oh! in that hour, fairer than daylight dawning,
Shall rise the glorious thought, I am with Thee!"

Here is the essential vivifying power in all spiritual life. Without it experience will be unreal, and daily living barren. Our religion will be a form and not a true substance, it will be a name and not a force. But we can have this communion if we will, and just to the measure that we will. We are not straitened in God.

Let it now be said, as this attempt to set forth the true nature and contents of the Spiritual Life closes, that it is the life which every one ought to live. It is the

symmetrical life, the only life which is worthy of the immortal soul. It is the life which worships, acknowledging God in public and in private. It is the life which is good, for its texture is wrought of love and obedience. It is the life which serves, doing good to all men as far as opportunity permits. It is the life which is hid with Christ in God. There is the seat of its activity and power, and there begins the shining path which leads on and up to endless glory.

Friend, *live it*.

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